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Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

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Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

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Note by the Secretary-General***

In its resolution 2001/19 of 25 July 2001, entitled "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan", the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, through the Council, a report on the implementation of the resolution. The General Assembly, in its resolution 56/204 of 21 December 2001, also requested a report. The annexed report, which has been prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), is submitted in response to the two resolutions.

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** E/2002/100.
*** Because of lack of official sources for most of the information contained in the present report, a longer period for clearance was required for extensive consultations within the various United Nations entities at Headquarters and in the field. The report was therefore delayed for processing by four weeks.

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Annex

Report prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Summary

Continued occupation of the Palestinian territory by Israel, the delays in the implementation of the agreements reached between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the delay in reaching a final solution intended to settle all outstanding claims between the two parties continue to aggravate the living conditions of the Palestinian people.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have resorted to excessive use of force, house demolitions, increasingly severe mobility restrictions and closure policies, negatively affecting the Palestinian economy and living conditions. Internal closures have, in effect, divided the West Bank and Gaza Strip into 54 isolated areas. At the end of 2001, the Gaza International Airport and the Gaza harbour were severely damaged by the Israeli army. In addition, the strict closure policy and movement restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities since September 2000 have seriously impeded the ability of aid agencies to deliver humanitarian assistance.

The Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory remain the primary issue fuelling the conflict between the two peoples. There are some 190 settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, inhabited by approximately 380,000 settlers, of whom some 180,000 live in the East Jerusalem area. Settlements are linked to each other and Israel by a vast system of bypass roads. These settlements and roads, which separate Palestinian communities and deprive Palestinians of agricultural land, have fragmented both land and people.

There is an extensive yet comparatively smaller settlement infrastructure in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights with some 17,000 Israeli settlers in 33 settlements. The failure of negotiations between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic in March 2000 has resulted in decisions aimed at reinvigorating settlement expansion. Employment opportunities for the Arab population in the Syrian Golan Heights continue to be restricted and access to education facilities are limited.

I. Introduction

1. The present report covers the period April 2001 to March 2002. In its resolution 2001/19 of 25 July 2001 on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, the Economic and Social Council stressed, inter alia, the importance of the revival of the Middle East peace process on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973 and 425 (1978) of 19 March 1978, and the principle of land for peace as well as the full and timely implementation of the agreements reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people.

2. In its resolution 56/204 of 21 December 2001, the General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land and water; and called upon Israel, the occupying Power, not to exploit, to cause loss or depletion of or to endanger the natural resources in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem and in the occupied Syrian Golan.

3. The delays in the implementation of the agreements reached between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) continue to aggravate the living conditions of the Palestinian people and to sustain, relentlessly, the current cycle of violence. In his briefing to the Security Council on 21 February 2002, the Secretary-General stated that:

> "a reduction in the violence is the most immediate priority. But I have become more and more convinced that trying to resolve the security problem on its own cannot work. Security cannot be dealt with in isolation. It has to have a context. It has to be addressed alongside key political issues, particularly the question of land, and the economic and social issues, including the increasing critical desperate conditions of the Palestinians. Failure to address these issues together will only spawn new and perhaps deadlier exchanges of reciprocal violence."[1]

II. Occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem

Upsurge in violence

4. Since the report of last year, the upsurge in violence has continued to rise and the nature of confrontations has increased in severity as characterized by the utilization of heavy conventional weapons, extrajudicial killings and collective punishment of the civilian population. Between 28 September 2000 and 31 January 2002, the records of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) indicate that an estimated 558 Palestinians were killed in the West Bank, and an estimated 364 Palestinians were killed in the Gaza Strip. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 54 of the fatalities and 1,600 of the injured in the Gaza Strip were children under the age of 18. Twenty-nine of those killed and 700 of those injured were UNRWA pupils.[2]

5. As the situation has continued to deteriorate, Israeli security forces have resorted to heavier weaponry, including tanks, combat helicopters and fighter jets. Currently, most Palestinian deaths result from Israeli missile attacks directed at selected individuals suspected of terrorism, but which, inevitably, have also killed innocent bystanders, and from shootings carried out by soldiers and settlers, sometimes after an exchange of gunfire. Lately, intensive military incursions into Palestinian areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority have resulted in many civilian deaths. Israeli deaths have largely been caused by suicide bomb attacks in Israel itself and by gunfire directed at settlers on bypass roads or in the proximity of settlements. The Secretary-General has continually condemned, in the strongest possible terms, suicide bombing attacks against citizens of Israel. He has also repeatedly stated that such indiscriminate terrorist attacks are morally repugnant and harmful to the Palestinian cause.

6. There have been 58 extrajudicial killings, or targeted assassinations, of Palestinians by Israel since September 2000. In some cases, other Palestinians have been killed by helicopter missile fire, tank fire and gunfire in the course of carrying out the assassinations.[3] Many innocent civilians were also killed in the bombing of villages or in gunfire

exchanges, in circumstances indicating an indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force.

7. The Israeli authorities have continued the widespread practice of destruction of property. UNRWA recorded 167 home demolitions in the West Bank in 2001. In the Gaza Strip, between September 2000 and 31 January 2002, UNRWA recorded the complete or partial destruction of 660 homes housing 845 families. Of these, 407 shelters housing 551 families — including 320 dwellings belonging to 448 refugee families — were completely destroyed.[4] Most such demolitions took place at night, without any advance warning being given to the residents; some residents were forced to flee their homes without being able to even remove their possessions. Dozens of houses have also been destroyed or damaged as a result of the use of heavy weaponry. Moreover, during the current crisis, IDF has destroyed a significant amount of agricultural land, especially in Gaza. The creation of buffer zones for bypass roads and settlements has resulted in the "sweeping" of large areas of agricultural land by bulldozers. A total of 385,808 fruit and olive trees have been uprooted, and wells and agricultural constructions destroyed.

8. UNRWA recorded 772 instances in 2001 when settlers in the West Bank attacked Palestinians, vandalized their property, blocked roads, or bulldozed agricultural land. In the Gaza Strip, where the settler population is small and largely confined to settlement enclaves, settler activity was minimal by comparison.[5] It should be noted that a substantial segment of the settlers carry weapons that they received from IDF.[6]

9. All such acts of violence and the occupation itself have a negative impact on the psyche of the Palestinian population. However, considering the high percentage of the population which is under the age of 18, the impact can be expected to significantly affect the next generation for years to come. Many people reportedly experience an overwhelming fear of the future and feelings of hopelessness. Studies show that, as a result of the crisis, there are high incidences of post-traumatic stress disorder among Palestinian children and youth.

10. Over 600 Palestinian children were arrested by the Israeli authorities between September 2000 and September 2001; around 160 remained incarcerated in Israeli jails. Moreover, almost all Palestinian child detainees face physical and psychological torture while under interrogation. While in prison, children are also denied the right to education and visits from family and lawyers.[7]

11. The crisis has serious gender impacts. As children are afraid of leaving the house, it has become more difficult for women to seek employment or education outside the house. Furthermore, the incidences of gender-based violence within families have been multiplying. The destruction of homes, the death of male heads of households coupled with men's frustration due to unemployment and immobility have resulted in a sharp increase in incest and domestic violence. According to the Gaza Mental Health Clinic, some former prisoners use the same tactics they experienced during interrogation to torture their wives and children.[8]

12. The sense of hopelessness and frustration due to unemployment tends to be associated with a loss of status for male household heads when they are the only or main economically active family members and can no longer meet their families' basic needs. This psychosocial impact of unemployment in turn is associated with an increase in domestic violence.[9]

Mobility restrictions and closure policies

13. Checkpoints, closures and curfews severely impede access to medical care, education and employment. There were many reports that Israeli authorities treat Palestinians in an abusive manner at checkpoints, subjecting them to verbal and physical harassment. Each day, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who wish to travel between Palestinian towns and villages must pass through one or more of the approximately 130 Israeli checkpoints across the occupied territory.[10]

14. Israeli closure policy has become the single most important factor negatively affecting the Palestinian economy and living conditions. Closure implies varying degrees of movement restrictions on Palestinian people, vehicles and goods: within the West Bank and Gaza; between the West Bank and Gaza and Israel; and at the international crossings between the West Bank and Gaza and neighbouring Jordan and Egypt. Generalized movement restrictions were first imposed in the West Bank and Gaza during the Gulf War in 1991 and have become more formalized and pervasive since 1993.[11]

15. For most of the period since October 2000, mobility between the West Bank and Gaza, and between the occupied Palestinian territory and the rest of the world, has been severely impeded. Travel for Palestinians between the West Bank and Gaza via the "safe passage" route has been blocked by the Israeli authorities since 6 October 2000. The passage was closed even though the Oslo Accords forbid its closure. According to the Accords, two routes were to be designated as safe passages. Israel is entitled, for security reasons, to close one of them or to alter the terms of entrance but must assure that one of the passages is always open.[12]

16. IDF has substantially increased the restrictions on movement of Palestinians in the occupied territory during the al-Aqsa intifada. Many of those harmed by these restrictions have been persons requiring medical treatment, mainly newborns, women and the elderly. From 1 October 2000 to 3 March 2002, there were 23 births at Israeli military roadblocks in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Among these, three miscarriages were caused by tear gas grenades and an additional three miscarriages were caused by the delays and harassment.[13] According to the Badil Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, 435 Palestinian children have been killed since September 2000.[14] Furthermore, since September 2001, more than 165 Palestinian ambulances have been hit by IDF fire; about 135 members of medical teams have been wounded and 8 killed, according to Physicians for Human Rights.[15]

17. While internal closure measures seemed to have been relaxed during the second quarter of 2001, internal closure in the West Bank was tightened again in June and has remained so to date. Internal closure is much more severe in the West Bank than in Gaza.[16] Israeli forces further restricted freedom of movement of Palestinians by imposing curfews, often for extended periods, on specific Palestinian towns or neighbourhoods. IDF practice on the ground involves the placement of checkpoints at the entrances to villages. Consequently, entry and exit are often possible only via dirt roads, entailing enormous hardships.

18. International border crossings have also been severely affected. Between October 2000 and February 2002, all of Gaza's border crossings through which residents, exports and imports transit, were closed for lengthy periods. The Gaza International Airport has remained closed since February 2001. In December 2001, the radar station and parts of the runway were destroyed by IDF. In January 2002, the runway was bulldozed. The Gaza harbour was destroyed by IDF during the last quarter of 2001.[17] Israeli attacks have resulted, according to the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Transport, in the direct loss of 68 km of main roads between cities and the destruction of 121 km of secondary roads between Palestinian towns. In addition, the Ministry also indicated that 654 public buses and 3,450 trucks have been forced out of service and that 6,505 public vehicles are working at 50 per cent of capacity.[18] Owing to these restrictions and attacks, Palestinian foreign trade has been affected, and imports and exports, trans-shipped through Israeli ports, have been delayed or blocked completely for most of this period.

19. Mobility restrictions have been made even more burdensome by road checkpoints, which have become a regular feature of Palestinian life. Palestinians are obliged to wait for long periods while Israeli soldiers check vehicles and inspect identity documents. In order to avoid these delays, Palestinians often abandon their cars or leave their taxis and cross the checkpoint on foot to catch a taxi on the other side of the checkpoint.

20. By mid-2001, there were 97 Israeli military checkpoints in the West Bank. Roads were also blocked with piles of earth, ripped up, or cut across with trenches. These measures divided the West Bank into over 100 separate, isolated sectors. In Gaza, there were 32 Israeli military checkpoints.[19] A study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development indicated that internal closures have, in effect, divided the West Bank and Gaza Strip into 54 isolated areas.[20] From September 2000 to December 2001, 33 Palestinian civilians have died as a result of being prohibited from reaching hospitals or seeking medical treatment. Such delays occur most frequently at checkpoints established by IDF.[21]

21. Israel's imposition of severe restrictions on freedom of movement carries a devastating impact on the already fragile Palestinian economy. The Palestinian population is poor even under normal conditions, with 50 per cent living in refugee camps. The imposition of additional burdens on such a population inevitably creates severe material, social and psychological hardships.

22. The strict closure policy and movement restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities since September 2000 have seriously impeded the ability of aid agencies to deliver both regular and emergency humanitarian assistance to the refugees in need. UNRWA staff, numbering 3,500 in the West Bank and 7,000 in Gaza, experienced severe work disruptions owing to IDF checkpoints that frequently delayed them or prevented them outright from reporting to their schools, clinics and field offices. The financial cost to UNRWA of forced workplace absences and lateness is estimated at US$ 2.8 million.[22]

23. The chief impact of the strife in the occupied Palestinian territory on UNRWA health services has been an increased demand for medical care. UNRWA regular health services have been burdened by the growing number of refugees who previously used private health providers but turned to UNRWA for free medical care because of the economic hardships associated with the closure. Another serious initial outcome of the restrictions on movement in the West Bank was a temporary decline in the number of children immunized in late 2000. Other indicators of a breakdown in preventive services in the West Bank, in particular, include an increase in stillbirths and low birth weight rates; late registration and irregular attendance of pregnant women for antenatal care; an increase in anaemia rates (an indicator of deterioration in nutritional status) and declining follow-up with medical providers by patients suffering from non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, with a concomitant drop in control rates.[23]

24. Restrictions on the freedom of movement imposed by the Israeli authorities have had severe impacts on education. Reports indicate that 190 schools have been temporarily closed, 55 per cent of older students have experienced difficulties in reaching higher education institutions and 1,300 students from Gaza have been unable to reach their universities in the West Bank.[24] There was a marked deterioration in scores on final examinations in UNRWA schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2001, resulting from both psychological trauma triggered by the strife and disruptions in learning caused by the persistent absences of teaching staff who were prevented from reaching their schools during internal closures.

The Palestinian economy

25. The crisis and the growing atmosphere of profound political and economic uncertainty had a devastating impact on the Palestinian economy. Consequently, the percentage of Palestinian people living below the poverty line ($2 per person per day) is reaching 50 per cent, which is more than double the poverty rate prior to the current crisis. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories (UNSCO) estimates that the total income losses to the Palestinian economy, during the period 1 October 2000 to 31 December 2001, range between $3.1 and $4.1 billion.

26. The World Bank estimates per capita gross national product (GNP) in 2001 to be 30 per cent lower than it was in 1994, at the beginning of the Oslo peace process. In 2000, real gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by between 6 and 7 per cent mainly owing to the poor performance of the Palestinian economy in the last quarter of 2000. The economy had been performing relatively well until the outbreak of violence. In 2001, the World Bank projected an additional 10 per cent decline in real GDP. The estimated decline of GNP is larger, at around 14 per cent, since the volume of worker activity abroad is expected to be over 30 per cent lower than in 2000.[25]

27. The cumulative effect of the restrictions on the freedom of movement of people and goods is perceived by the Palestinians as a siege. It has resulted in severe socio-economic hardships. The restriction on the entry of Palestinians into Israel has meant denial of access to their places of work in Israel to an estimated 115,000 Palestinians. The consequences have been devastating: the families of these workers are now suffering from a complete lack of income. Over 50 per cent of the Palestinian workforce is now unemployed.[26]

28. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that the volume of goods imported into the occupied Palestinian territory had dropped by 8.5 per cent during the last quarter of 2000 compared with 1999 figures; the drop continued in 2001 to 47 per cent as a result of Israeli closure measures. Palestinian exports declined by 4.9 per cent in 2000 and 52 per cent in 2001. The Bureau reported that the number of people working in industry declined by 38 per cent between 1 October 2000 and 31 May 2001. During the same period, the number of workers in construction dropped by 20 per cent; in home trade by 26 per cent;

in transportation and telecommunications by 23 per cent; and in the services sector by 36 per cent. Production levels in agriculture dropped by 13 per cent, in industry by 19 per cent; in construction by 29 per cent; in home trade by 14 per cent; in transportation and telecommunications by 2 per cent; and in other activities by 23 per cent between 1 October 2000 and 31 May 2001.[27]

29. A survey undertaken by the Palestinian Federation of Chambers of Commerce found that total imports into the West Bank and Gaza had declined by 56.1 per cent compared with pre-crisis levels.[28] Especially large declines were observed in the following import categories: capital goods (83.7 per cent); vehicles (79 per cent); household equipment (63.3 per cent); construction materials (52.7 per cent); and consumption products (48 per cent). Imports from Arab countries decreased by 62.2 per cent; from Israel by 44.5 per cent; and from Europe by 41.5 per cent. In addition, the survey indicates an increase of 25 percent in the cost of imports and an increase of 46.1 per cent in import time delay.[29]

30. The survey found that, during the crisis, total exports from the West Bank and Gaza Strip to Israel and other countries had declined by 50.3 per cent compared with pre-crisis levels. Palestinian agriculture exports declined by 52.6 per cent while industrial exports fell by 49.6 per cent. Palestinian exports to Israeli markets declined 51.9 per cent while exports to Arab countries dropped by 27 per cent.[30]

31. The Palestinian Authority's fiscal situation and prospects have been severely impacted by the current crisis. With closure measures disrupting tax collection, the contraction of the Palestinian economy eroding the Palestinian tax base and with the Israeli suspension of tax clearances, the fiscal revenues declined by about 57 per cent during the first nine months of the crisis. The international community has responded to the Palestinian Authority fiscal crisis by providing large amounts of direct fiscal support. By the end of 2001, the Palestinian Authority had received approximately $575 million, primarily from Arab countries and the European Union.[31]

32. According to the survey by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 14 per cent of households have reported that they have lost their sources of usual income during the past year. Of these, 10.1 per cent (35,000 households) were in the West Bank and 21.9 per cent (38,000 households) in the Gaza Strip. About 47.7 per cent of the households reported that they had lost more than 50 per cent of their usual income. The median monthly income of Palestinian households has decreased from 2,500 Israeli shekels before the outbreak of the crisis to 1,500 shekels in October 2001. The median income in March 2001 was 1,200 shekels and in June 1,300 shekels. The median income in the West Bank decreased from 3,000 shekels to 1,700 shekels and in the Gaza Strip from 1,944 shekels to 900 shekels.[32]

33. The current crisis has compounded the long-term economic decline of East Jerusalem's economic base. A study prepared by the Palestinian Chamber of Commerce and Industry revealed that Arab hotels in Jerusalem witnessed the cancellation of 94 per cent of their reservations during the period from October 2000 to March 2001. Debts accrued in the tourism sector during early 2001 were approximately $13.5 million. Losses in the tourism sector between October 2000 and March 2001 were approximately $50 million.

34. A World Bank report concluded that, notwithstanding security and political considerations, unless the Palestinian territory is able to achieve high levels of economic growth, the prospects for future poverty reduction are not encouraging. Not only will the number of poor Palestinians grow rapidly, but their share in the population will also increase, which could become a socially destabilizing factor. Furthermore, unless Palestinians gain greater access to external markets and to better paying jobs, whether in Israel or in higher productivity occupations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, it will be difficult for them to escape poverty.

Water, environment and natural resources

35. In general terms, the environmental impact of Israeli measures taken during the crisis fall into three broad categories: land degradation, water resource damage and a halt to essential infrastructure work. Land degradation is occurring rapidly owing to the felling of thousands of trees and orchards and the blockade of roads used by Palestinians, resulting in thousands of new dirt tracks being created as alternative transport routes. Water resource damage is occurring through damage to environmental facilities, particularly sewage infrastructure, and due to

restrictions imposed on proper waste disposal. Owing to the internal closures, outlying Palestinian villages are being denied access to drinking water. Many infrastructure projects supported by the international aid community to improve the Palestinian environment have been brought to a halt because of the closures.[33]

36. Two hundred thousand Palestinians living in 218 West Bank villages are not connected to a water network and therefore have no running water. This population suffers a severe water crisis. They are unable to meet their basic water needs, including basic personal hygiene and house cleaning, and as a result, face significant health risks. The restrictions on movement imposed by IDF since the beginning of the crisis aggravate the situation and make it difficult for tankers to transport water to affected communities.[34]

37. Since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, Israel has continued to maintain almost complete control of the water sector in the occupied Palestinian territory. Every new water project, including projects in Area A (in which Palestinians would have complete authority for civilian security), requires the consent of Israel's representatives on the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee. The additional water quantities that Israel and the Palestinian Authority developed pursuant to the Interim Agreement led to a certain improvement in the supply of water for household and urban use in various areas of the West Bank. However, in the summer, many Palestinians continue to suffer from frequent disconnections of the water network. These disconnections result from the allocation programmes that various cities are compelled to implement because of the increased demand in summer months.[35]

38. The average Palestinian in the West Bank consumes 60 litres of water a day. The precise consumption of residents in communities that are not connected to a water network is not known. However, it is significantly less than the overall average. By comparison, average per capita consumption in Israel and the settlements is 350 litres a day. The minimum quantity of water recommended by the United States Agency for International Development for household and urban use alone is 100 litres a day per person.[36]

39. There are 36 Palestinian villages that are completely dependent on water vendors to supply their water needs. During periods of the siege, these villages (with a total of 86,255 inhabitants) are reported to have had no water supplied to them for periods ranging from a week to two months.[37] Furthermore, owing to the difficulties in access to water springs (many being in Area C, where Israel retains sole security authority), the price of trucked water has increased considerably at a time when employment and income for Palestinians has plummeted.[38]

40. The occupation legacy is responsible for the gross lack of attention to environmental issues and investment in physical infrastructure within the Palestinian cities and villages themselves. This includes a degraded solid waste management infrastructure, lack of wastewater treatment plants and proper water supply facilities, and degraded groundwater quality and quantity (particularly in Gaza). A report written by the World Bank Reform Campaign claims that there has been no effort to improve the sewage situation in the southern West Bank and untreated sewage threatens to pollute the water supply.

41. Land confiscation for establishing settlements has had a major impact on Palestinians and their economy, especially the agriculture sector, which accounts for about 30 per cent of Palestinian national income. The dispersed location of Israeli settlements is an important factor in the reduction of open spaces, including in some cases the loss of biologically important areas, such as forests and sensitive ecosystems.[39] Bypass roads, which are established to enable settlers and military vehicles to move around without traversing Palestinian residential areas in the belief that their security is improved, contribute to a further deterioration of the environment. The roads are designed for moving at high speeds, which require that the angles be minimized: wadis are therefore filled up and hills bulldozed to make way. No buildings or trees are allowed to remain on a wide strip of 50-100 metres on either side. This translates into a 350-metre wide swath[40] of landscape destruction over more than 200 kilometres of bypass roads already built. An additional 250 kilometres of bypass roads are in the planning stages.[41]

Israeli settlements

42. The great majority of the Member States regard Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza as contrary to article 49 (6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits an occupying Power from

transferring parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies. Numerous resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly have condemned the settlements as illegal. In the words of the Special Rapporteur on Israeli Practices, "Expanding settlements, demolition of houses and the destruction of property, restrictions on freedom of movement and the economic blockade are a constant reminder to Palestinians of the occupation".[42] Moreover, apart from the fact that settlements are a constant source of friction between the two peoples, assuring the security of the settlements and roads is imposing a tremendous burden on Israel. It is estimated that the numerous settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory require the defence of borders 10 times longer than the 1967 Green Line (a border approximately 2,000 miles long).[43]

43. Today, there are some 190 settlements in the West Bank and Gaza inhabited by approximately 380,000 settlers, of whom some 180,000 live in the East Jerusalem area. Settlements are linked to each other and Israel by a vast system of bypass roads (from which Palestinian vehicles are excluded) which have a 50- to 75-metre buffer zone on each side in which no building is permitted. These settlements and roads, which separate Palestinian communities and deprive Palestinians of agricultural land, have fragmented both land and people. In effect, they seriously hamper the possibility of a Palestinian State as they destroy the territorial integrity of the occupied Palestinian territory.[44]

44. More than half of the net increase of 2,561 in the settlement population during the first half of 2001 was due to increases at three religious settlements: Beitar, south-west of Jerusalem; Tel Zion/Adam, bordering the north-east corner of East Jerusalem; and Modi'in Ilit, on the Green Line between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. In the Gaza Strip, where clashes have been the most violent, the 17 settlements with a population of approximately 7,000 have sustained a small net increase in population during 2001.

45. According to an Israeli Housing Ministry report, most of the thousands of housing units constructed in public housing projects in Givat Ze'ev and Ma'ale Adumim over the past six years remain unsold and empty. Despite the existence of empty units, the Ministry issued a tender for an additional 496 units for Ma'ale Adumim on 5 April 2001. The Ministry noted that 76 per cent of the housing units offered in Har Homa between 1999 and 2000 (2,200) remained unsold in early 2001. In efforts to encourage prospective settlers, a programme offering a grant of $6,250 and a subsidized mortgage for an equal amount to buyers was initiated. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, there are currently 6,130 units under construction in settlements throughout the West Bank and Gaza.

III. Occupied Syrian Golan

46. There is an extensive, yet comparatively small settlement infrastructure in the Golan Heights in the Syrian Arab Republic, occupied by Israel since June 1967. Some 17,000 Israeli settlers, residing in 33 settlements, represent an increase of 18 per cent since 1994. Over 17,000 Syrians, remaining after 1967, are clustered in five villages close to the borders of the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon.[45]

47. Negotiations conducted between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic aimed at ending Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights and establishing peaceful relations between the two countries ended in failure in March 2000. This resulted in a number of decisions aimed at reinvigorating settlement expansion on the Golan Heights. The Golan Heights Regional Council intends to open a campaign in early 2002 for the construction of 1,000 new dwelling units in Israeli settlements during the next three years.[46]

48. Employment opportunities for the Arab population in the Syrian Golan Heights continues to be extremely restricted, since the movement of the Arab population between the Golan and the Syrian Arab Republic remains problematic. The employment available to the Syrian population in the Golan is limited to unskilled and semi-skilled daily wage labour. In most instances, these workers have no access to social benefits or health insurance, and job security is extremely precarious, with no provision for unemployment compensation. Over and above these concerns, substantial wage differences prevail, to the detriment of the Syrian Arab population of the Golan.[47] The improvement of living conditions is further inhibited owing to measures that restrict the expansion of educational facilities, as well as limited access to education, either in the Syrian Arab Republic or Israel.[48]

Notes

[1] United Nations, Department of Public Information, press release, SG/SM/8129; SC/7305; 21 February 2002.

[2] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) estimates, dated 6 March 2002.

[3] B'Tselem, "Statistics on the al-Aqsa Intifada: Assassinations — Extrajudicial Executions".

[4] UNRWA estimates, 6 March 2002.

[5] UNRWA contribution to this report, 6 March 2002.

[6] B'Tselem, *Tacit Consent: Israeli Policy on Law Enforcement toward Settlers in the Occupied Territories*.

[7] These rights are conferred by article 37 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

[8] United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) contribution to the present report dated 6 February 2002.

[9] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights contribution to the present report, 8 March 2002.

[10] United States, Department of State, 2001 Human Rights Report, Israel and the occupied territories.

[11] United Nations, Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator (UNSCO), Closure Update Summary: "The Impact on the Palestinian Economy of Confrontation, Border Closures and Mobility Restrictions", 1 October 2000-30 September 2001.

[12] See Oslo II Accords, appendix 1.

[13] Al-Haq.

[14] BADIL (Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights).

[15] *Ha'aretz*, 22 March 2002.

[16] UNSCO contribution to the present report dated 21 February 2002.

[17] UNSCO contribution to the present report, 21 February 2002.

[18] Communication of the Ministry of Transport to ESCWA, 9 February 2002.

[19] BADIL, 23 August 2001.

[20] UNCTAD, *Secretariat Report on UNCTAD Assistance to the Palestinian People*, Geneva, August 2001.

[21] *Hear Palestine*, 8 December 2001.

[22] UNRWA estimates, 6 March 2002.

[23] Ibid.

[24] UNSCO Closure Update Summary: "The Impact on the Palestinian Economy of Confrontation, Border Closures and Mobility Restrictions", 1 October 2000-30 September 2001.

[25] The Economist, The EU Country Report October 2001, pp. 52-53.

[26] OHCHR contribution to this report, 8 March 2002.

[27] *Ha'aretz*, 5 October 2001.

[28] Palestinian Federation of Chambers of Commerce, "Palestinian External Trade and Israeli Impediments", July 2001 (Arabic).

[29] UNSCO Closure Update Summary: "The Impact on the Palestinian Economy of Confrontation, Border Closures and Mobility Restrictions", 1 October 2000-30 September 2001.

[30] Ibid.

[31] UNSCO contribution to the present report, 21 February 2002.

[32] *The Jerusalem Times*, 5 October 2001.

[33] Applied Research Institute — Jerusalem (ARIJ), "Israel's Double Standard towards Environmental Protection", 2001.

[34] B'Tselem, *Not Even a Drop: The Water Crisis in Palestinian Villages without a Water Network*, 5 August 2001.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Palestinian Hydrology Group, *Report on Israeli aggressions against Palestinian water sector during Al-Aqsa intifada*, December 2000.

[38] Applied Research Institute — Jerusalem, "Israel's Double Standard towards Environmental Protection", 2001.

[39] Ibid.

[40] From the Israeli Coalition Against House Demolitions and other sources.

[41] Applied Research Institute — Jerusalem, "Israel's Double Standard towards Environmental Protection", 2001.

[42] OHCHR contribution to the present report, 21 February 2002.

[43] *Report*, May-June 2001, p. 2.

[44] Ibid.

[45] *Report*, November-December 1999, p. 6.

[46] *Ma'ariv*, 25 November 2001.

[47] Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Report on Israeli Practices Against Human Rights of Syrian Citizens in the Occupied Syrian Golan", June 1997, pp. 12-20.

[48] Ibid., pp. 20-24.